



ABSTRACT

SOCIAL WORK

KENNEDY, SHAKIRA

B.A. LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY, 1999

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF TRAVELERS AID FIRST MONTH RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ON THE STABILIZATION OF HOMELESS FAMILIES

Advisor: Dr. Sarita Davis

Thesis dated May 2001

This evaluation examines the effect of Travelers Aid First Month Rental Assistance Program on the stabilization of homeless families. Travelers Aid has two program components: Travel and Resettlement. This evaluation focuses on the Resettlement program, specifically, the First Month's Rental Assistance Program. The sample consists of 20 families with children, who have received assistance between July 1999 and July 2000. Participants were randomly selected from a list provided by the agency without age or race restrictions. For the purpose of this evaluation, stabilization is defined as a family remaining in the same location for 6 months. The evaluation measured stabilization using the Kennedy Stabilization Questionnaire (KSQ), which consists of 11 open and close ended questions. The questions on the KSQ are arranged for the apartment complex to give information on the clients' rental patterns during their stay. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data along with graphs for a clearer interpretation of the results. The findings showed that Travelers Aid Rental Assistance Program stabilized families for 6 months, but families were less likely to remain within the same location for one year. Findings from this evaluation can be used to help Travelers Aid and other social service agencies find a variety of avenues to enhance their rental assistance programs.

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF TRAVELERS AID FIRST MONTH RENTAL
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ON THE STABILIZATION OF HOMELESS FAMILIES

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY

SHAKIRA KENNEDY

WHITNEY M. YOUNG, JR., SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 2001

R vi

T 42

© 2001

Shakira Kennedy

All Rights Reserved

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to first acknowledge the Most High (Anu), and my parents for my essence and being. Thank you to my family: Claudette, Krishna, Meg, Juliet, my nieces, and nephews for continuously believing and supporting me. Your inspirations will never be forgotten. A special thanks to Sean McIntosh for saving my thesis, my sanity, listening, supporting, caring, but most of all for putting up with all of my drama; love you always. Thanks to the “A” crew/Fabulous six, Andridia Mapson, for being down to earth, Tomico Perkins-for being most supportive in everything, Jacqueline Harvey- for her peace mentality, Ilka Franklin-for that motherly love, Michele Weber-for her playful spirit. Thanks to all of my teachers, the Residence Life Department and to all of the Resident Directors all of whom have made this one of the best experiences. Heartfelt thanks to Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta for allowing me to use their program. Thanks Ja’son for assisting in formulating the foundation for this evaluation. Special thanks to Kim Farris for her time, efforts, and inspiration as a M.S.W. program evaluator; you have sparked my interest even more as an evaluator. Last but not least, I thank my advisor Dr. Sarita Davis for taking me on as a student at the last minute and for taking care of my mind, body and spirit during this process. Thank you for your great spirit, your energy, and for exposing me to new venues within the profession, but most of all, thank you for being who you are. Stay innocent and sweet! For those not mentioned you are certainly not forgotten; many thanks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | ii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | v |
| LIST OF TABLES | vi |
| CHAPTERS | |
| I. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Purpose of Evaluation | 1 |
| The Program. | 2 |
| Statement of the Problem | 3 |
| Significance of the Evaluation | 4 |
| Summary | 5 |
| II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE | 7 |
| Evaluation: The Challenges and Potential Changes | 7 |
| Housing Vouchers | 9 |
| Community Building: What does it take to build a community? | 11 |
| Literature Strengths and Weaknesses. | 12 |
| Conceptual Framework | 13 |
| Proposed Evaluation | 14 |
| Summary | 14 |
| III. METHODOLOGY | 15 |
| Sample | 15 |
| Measure | 15 |
| Design | 16 |
| Procedures | 16 |
| Statistical Analysis | 17 |
| Summary | 17 |

TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

| | | |
|------------------|---|----|
| IV. | PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS | 18 |
| | Demographics | 18 |
| | Summary | 23 |
| V. | CONCLUSIONS | 24 |
| | Limitations of the Evaluation | 28 |
| | Suggested Research for Future Practices | 29 |
| | Summary | 29 |
| VI. | IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE | 31 |
| | Summary | 32 |
| APPENDICES | | |
| A. | Sample Assessment of Program Process/Program Outcome Data | 33 |
| B. | Consent Form for Evaluation | 35 |
| C. | Kennedy Stabilization Questionnaire | 36 |
| D. | Site Approval Letter | 38 |
| REFERENCES | | 39 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| FIGURES | PAGE |
|---|------|
| 1. Length of time within housing complex | 20 |
| 2. Number of times a family was late on rental payments | 21 |

LIST OF TABLES

| TABLE | PAGE |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| 1. Participant Demographics | 19 |
| 2. Community Integration | 22 |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As this country approaches another turn of the century, it also faces a housing crisis where many Americans are paying over half of their income for shelter. This chapter explains the purpose of this evaluation, gives an overview of Travelers Aid, specifying the rental assistance program, statement of the problem, and the significance of the evaluation as it relates to evaluating programs in the field of social work followed by the significance of the evaluation and concludes with the summary of the chapter.

Purpose of Evaluation

This evaluation examines the effect of Travelers Aid First Month Rental Assistance Program on the short-term stability of homeless families. Currently, there are greater expectations of agencies and individual workers to justify funding, methodologies, and effectiveness (Martin and Kettner, 1997). However, there are constant questions about how to measure the efficacy of ways that are understandable and productive. Effective human-service practice today requires agencies to make evaluation a central part of their operations (Manela and Moxley, 1999). Manela and Moxley further writes, "Evaluation within the context of human-service agency is the capacity to judge what the agency does; how it does it; and the consequences, outcomes, and effectiveness of its programs, and products" (p. 15). When looking at rental assistance programs there has not been a close examination of their effectiveness.

The Program

Since 1900, Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta (TAMA) has been quietly going about the business of being the principal social service agency for low-income newcomers and travelers in distress in the Atlanta area. Today, Metropolitan Atlanta is attracting more migrants from other cities and states than any other U.S. metropolitan area. Unfortunately, not all of these new arrivals come equipped with enough resources, a job, or a viable plan to make a successful transition into the Atlanta community. TAMA provides services to these newcomer families and helps them make productive decisions to stabilize their lives when they find themselves in crisis after arriving in the area. Families are assisted with basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, and transportation, while concurrently, receiving counseling about their decision to relocate to Atlanta. In a case where the family's decision to resettle was appropriate, TAMA staff and family members work to create a viable plan to achieve the family's self-sufficiency in a secure environment. This includes, but is not limited to, developing plans for obtaining employment, finding and addressing health needs. Staff also tries to ensure that school-aged children are enrolled in appropriate schools.

The mission of the agency is to help distressed low-income travelers, as well as newcomers to the metro Atlanta community, who are in need of emergency financial aid and limited professional counseling. The primary focus of Travelers is resettlement and travel, but the focus of this evaluation is on the Resettlement Program. The resettlement program is designed to help clients establish stable households in the Metro Atlanta area; one of the components of the resettlement program is the First Month Rental Assistance

Program. The program is designed to provide the first month's rent to enable a family to move into suitable housing. This assistance is only available for families considered able to permanently resettle in the Atlanta area. Families must have suitable employment prospects and a plan for stabilizing in the environment (TAMA, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

According to the National Coalition for the Homeless (1999), the lack of affordable housing and the limited scale of housing assistance programs have contributed to the current housing crisis and to homelessness. The number of Americans living on the street or in shelters increases yearly by about 25%. Approximately one third of this population is comprised of families, generally headed by single parents with two to three children (Percy, 1997).

Families with children constitute approximately 40% of people who become homeless (Shinn and Weitman, 1996). In 1998, a survey of 30 United States cities found children accounted for 25% of the homeless population (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 1998). Research indicates that families, single mothers, and children make up the largest group of people who are homeless in rural areas (Vissing, 1996). As income dropped for many individuals, housing costs rose and the supply of low-income housing decreased to 28,000 in 1985 (Dolbeare, 1988). Over 2.2 million people are homeless in the United States, more than at any time since the Great Depression.

The Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless believes that in a year, 47,200 people in Atlanta will become homeless for some period of time. The city of Atlanta and several metro counties calculated in 1995 there were 11,300 homeless people in the

Atlanta area on an average night. The estimate used was based on a national study showing 3.1 percent of adult Americans were homeless sometime between 1985 and 1990 (Towns, 1998). Gentrification, urban renewal, and the conversion of hotels and apartments into condominiums further diminished the availability of affordable housing.

Significance of Evaluation

Researchers state, “Since nonprofit organizations are increasingly being asked to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs and services, agencies that decide to engage in program evaluation must chose among various approaches and methods” (Fine et al., 2000). Friedlander and Robins (1995) assess the relative efficiency of two types of nonexperimental procedures that are frequently used in evaluating social programs.

According to Gardner (2000), design evaluation is another option for evaluating programs. Design evaluation is a process of documenting, clarifying, and illuminating its model, which leads to its progressive refinement and concurrent improved service delivery to clients. Gardner goes on to explain that all programs have some form of logic or system about how they operate, but the logic is often implicit or incomplete.

Patton (1998) anticipated that, while the profession’s diversity can help make the field unique and exciting, it also has the potential for increasing tensions between activist and academic interest, “tensions that arise because of the different demands and reward structures under which the two groups often operate” (p.148). Wagner (1999), found many social programs work very well at achieving their goals, but many do not, according to a recent report from the Russell Sage Foundation, “Social Programs that Work”. Other key questions that must be asked in evaluating social programs like

TAMA include: What is the magnitude of the program in effect? How long does the effect of the program last? What is the relationship of the evaluator to the program? Can the program and its results be replicated? Can the program maintain its effectiveness on a larger scale?

Increasingly, TAMA and other human-service agencies, will feel under considerable pressure to perform in new and demanding ways. Funders, consumers, and regulators require agencies not only to improve the services they offer, but also to develop or adapt innovative approaches to social, mental-health, and rehabilitation services (Light, 1988). The stabilization of homeless families is the focus of this evaluation. This evaluation is significant for social services and other agencies that offer short-term housing assistance in assessing their own success or shortcomings. The findings should help TAMA to identify the programs' strengths and weakness and ultimately provide direction for program improvements. Similar programs may also benefit from the findings. Ultimately, the findings should contribute to existing knowledge about rental assistance and stability as well as the integration of social support.

Summary

Since the shrinking supply of affordable housing, and the increase of homeless families, agencies such as Travelers Aid have tried to address this social issue by providing rental assistance to homeless families. Evaluation of these programs becomes critical when determining program success, and goal attainment.

Chapter 2 outlines the review of the literature on Section 8 housing, community integration, housing vouchers and the homeless. Chapter 3, the methodology section, gives information on how the rental assistance program was evaluated. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the evaluation objectives. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings, and finally Chapter 6 discusses the implications as they relate to social work practice.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature for the evaluation. The literature addresses studies conducted on Section 8, housing vouchers and the homeless, followed by components of community integration. The studies below will provide the reader with some background knowledge as to how the government and other scholars viewed the issue of housing and housing assistance. Limitations of the literature are discussed as it relates to the evaluation. The proposed evaluation is addressed within this chapter, along with the conceptual framework.

Evaluation: The Challenges and Potential Changes

In the 1970s, the federal government promoted housing in a straightforward way. It reimbursed state and local housing authorities for the cost of bonds they issued to build public housing. It also established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to create more liquidity in the mortgage market by insuring most mortgages on homes and multi-family dwellings. The section 8 housing program was designed to overcome these obstacles, and for a time it did (Ravitch, 1997).

According to Khadduri and Struyk (1981), the Lower Income Housing Assistance Program (Section 8) was implemented fairly rapidly, with the first families receiving assistance a little over a year after passage of the 1974 legislation. The short time

required to get families into existing units, plus the relatively large allocations for existing housing during the first few years, meant that by the end of 1978, Section 8 added 460,000 to the total number of low-income families receiving federal housing subsidies. Annual outlays for the program in 1978 were \$670 million.

Randall (2000) examined how Section 8 created challenges to housing projects in Pennsylvania. The study states that the Section 8 program was not used to promote the supply of new and affordable housing. Rather, it was used in a way that concentrates extremely poor households in need of services in a haphazard manner that is subject to market conditions and often times counter to the principles of sound planning and responsible public policy. However, Khadduri and Struyk (1981) found Section 8 existence was a well-structured and successful program, which needed improvement but not fundamental redirection.

Mulroy (1990) reported that the laissez-faire program design of the Section 8 program is inappropriate to the housing search of low-income single mothers, who require intensive, targeted search services to access the private rental market. Implementation plans should acknowledge that most single mothers are not equal competitors with market renters. Mulroy (1990) concludes by stating, “low-income single mothers like other people, hope to achieve a better life through freedom of housing choice. Using the Section 8 program to reach this goal, however, is problematic” (p. 545).

Housing Vouchers

Research Atlanta, Inc. (1997) conducted research concerning the size of the homeless population in metropolitan Atlanta, its composition, and its housing needs. Results found that the annual prevalence estimates from the Task Force for the Homeless indicates that at some point during 1994, 47,200 people in metropolitan Atlanta experienced a period (of varying duration) in which they were homeless. This estimate is based on adding together the Task Force for the Homeless estimates of the number of different people who stayed in the various homeless shelters. An evaluation of the methodology used suggests counter-balancing sources or errors. Consideration of the number of beds in shelters and other facilities for the homeless and the turnover rates in them, as well as other local aspects of homelessness suggests that there is probably an over count of about 7,200 people in the Task Force's estimate. Thus, the study concluded that the number of people in 10-county region who experienced some homelessness during the recent 12 months is 40,000.

In order to meet the needs of housing, Barton (1996) focuses on the debate of how to supply low-income public housing for persons in the United States. The three phases of housing assistance programs and a comparison of social housing and housing allowances are discussed. Barton concluded by stating, housing allowances help far more tenants in the present and near future, but create long-term moral obligations that, realistically, should be taken on by the federal rather than the local government.

Hartung and Henig (1997) analyzed the census tract location of certificates and voucher households in the United States and compared them with the distribution of

public housing and other project based subsidized housing development. Data was collected from several sources. Through HUD, the authors contained the geocode latitude of more than 11,000 Section 8 certificate and voucher participants in the entire D.C. metropolitan statistical area. Results of the study showed that, among the 875 tracts included in this study, the correlation between percentage black and median household income is $-.56$ ($p=.0000$).

Ards (1991), further examines whether the social and economic characteristics of a regional planning district play a significantly different role in the likelihood that a district will have housing vouchers or certificate recipients. A second analysis examines the average monthly rent paid by African Americans and Caucasians for housing in the certificate and voucher programs. The results suggest that Caucasians receive greater economic benefits in the voucher program, than in the certificate program, while blacks do not.

This analysis examined neighborhood quality using seven indices: the mean family income of renters (INCA), the mean family income of owners (INC B), the employment rate of males (UM), the average rent (RENT), the percent of the population that is black (RACE), the percent of units that are owner-occupied (OCC), and the proportion of the population with no high school education, that live in the neighborhood (EDUC). It was hypothesized that higher mean income, lower unemployment rate, higher rents, lower percentage black, higher fraction or owner-occupied units, and a lower percentage of the population with no high school, would increase the quality of the neighborhood. The findings of the study suggested that the higher the percent of the

population that is black and the higher the fraction of owner-occupied housing units, the greater the odds of a district having voucher recipients than certificate recipients.

Community Building: What does it take to build a community?

One of TAMA's main goals is to integrate their clients into stable communities. The National Civic Review (1999), wrote an article, which focuses on a panel discussion on the role of community organizations, foundations and social-service agencies in developing successful community-wide programs. Lessons and challenges reflected in a comprehensive community-building approach were addressed. The panelists discussed several examples of collaborative efforts, including recent welfare reform programs in Virginia and Minnesota, and illustrated the inherent challenges and successes of community building. Challenges include political barriers, differing organizational structures, and a deep distrust between the public and private sectors. Successes include the power generated by coalition building and the grassroots involvement of neighborhood residents to influence change in their own communities. The overall message conveyed by the panelists is the importance of building coalitions and reaching across traditional barriers to influence community change.

Walsh (1997), takes another perspective when she talks about community building as a vital response to urban poverty in the United States. The goal of overhauling the nation's anti-poverty approach and creating communities that work for low-income families are examined, along with the importance of relationships. The author states, "building community requires work by all sectors-local residents, community-based organizations, businesses, schools, religious institutions, health and

social agencies-in an atmosphere of trust, cooperation, and respect. It takes time and committed work to make such collaboration more than rhetoric” (p 293). When demonstrating the point the author provides three case studies of Savannah, The Bronx, and Baltimore.

According to Welsh (1996), the information on how to strengthen and expand community practice and community building, was brought to the surface as a result of the diminished federal government’s role in social programs. She further discusses what community building refers to, what skills are needed by social workers to stay ahead of information development and change, and 10 ingredients for community building. These ingredients include: wholeness incorporating diversity, a reasonable base of shared values, care, trust, teamwork, effective internal communication, participation, affirmation, links beyond the community, development of young people, a forward view, and institutional arrangements for community maintenance.

Literature Strengths and Weaknesses

The literature reviewed provided critical information about the efficacy of the evaluation of short housing interventions. A variety of methods have been presented along with community integration, but none has captured the essence of what makes rental assistance programs work. With the increase of the homeless population and the decrease in the housing supply, the country faces a housing crisis of a growing population. Mulroy (1990), suggests that there needs to be an improvement of program development and coordination when dealing with Section 8. She further states there needs to be a three-pronged strategy to improve program participation.

Overall, there is a lack of information regarding rental assistance programs from social service agencies, and the effectiveness of these programs is unknown. With the number of social service programs providing rental assistance there is a lack of documentation of evaluations from these social service agencies, along with the lack of long-term follow-up contributes to the limitation of the literature. Fisher (2000), is aware of this challenge when conducting his own evaluation, “the principal limitation of the evaluation was that little to no data was available on longer-term outcomes related to housing stability or economic self-sufficiency” (p. 403). The literature also cites some of the challenges of rental assistance programs like Section 8 such as: not promoting the supply of affordable housing, along with concentrating the poor. In sum, the literature suggests little is known about the effects stabilizing with community involvement. This integration is needed for some programs to be successful and efficient, as well as, what it will take for Travelers Aid to truly integrate its clients.

Conceptual Framework

Brandell (1997) defines the systems theory perspective, as a whole with its relationships and interactions with other systems with a mechanism of growth and change. It is the interaction between social units, which creates a social organization, where the social organization itself has functional and reciprocal relationships with its social environment. The social organization can then be defined as a social group, family, formal organization, or community. This theory gives a clearer understanding of the interactions between individuals, groups, organizations, communities, larger social systems, and their environments. The interaction between each system, the agency, the

clients and the apartment complex demonstrates this theory. A successful integration of the theory would be a high level of participation from the clients in community activities, the apartment complex's knowledge about these clients and the agency working to provide follow-ups for these clients. Outcome measures include the response from the Kennedy Stabilization Questionnaire.

Proposed Evaluation

The proposed evaluation is an outcome assessment of the Travelers Aid First Month Rental Assistance Program on the stabilization of homeless families. The main purpose of this evaluation is to measure how successful Travelers Aid has been with stabilizing homeless families in permanent housing, which is defined as remaining in the same house six months post intervention. The primary evaluation question is "Did Travelers Aid rental assistance program stabilize homeless families?"

Summary

Incorporation of research and program evaluation in social work practice is a recurring issue in social work literature. Program evaluators and researchers continue to search for ways to engage program stakeholders in the process of designing, implementing, and maintaining evaluation activities that have both scientific merit and practical use (Secret, Jordan & Janet, 1999). The next chapter outlines the methodology for this evaluation. It provides a description of the perspective setting, sample population, type of measure, procedures, and the statistical analysis that was used to obtain the results.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter reviewed the procedures used to conduct this evaluation. The sample, measures, procedures, statistical analysis and summary are discussed in detail.

Sample

The sample consists of 20 families who have received assistance for the agency's fiscal year of July 1999- July 2000. Families are considered as either a male or female head of household, having at least one or more children. Participants were randomly selected from a list provided from the agency without age or race restrictions. Five participants were dropped from the evaluation due to incomplete information on intake forms. This sample cannot be generalized to all rental assistance programs because of the small sample size. However, it can provide a better understanding to future practitioners of what clients and programs need to ensure the program's goals and objectives are being met.

Measure

Data for this evaluation was collected using the Kennedy's Stabilization Questionnaire (KSQ). The KSQ consists of 11 open and closed ended questions directed to the management of the apartment complex. The KSQ questions the management's perceptions of how the program worked for the tenants and how stabilized they were at

the time of the placement. The validity of the instrument is sound; because it will measure the length of time the participants remained with the complex. However, the reliability of the instrument is unknown since this instrument has not been used before.

Design

The design for this evaluation is XO, also known as the posttest only design. This design is the most basic of research designs. This research design is simple and provides the information needed to conduct this evaluation. The “X”, represents the intervention, which is the money for rent. The “O”, represents the measure, which is the KSQ. An internal validity threat to this evaluation is the lack of follow up from the agency, and other variables involved that caused families not to participate in community activities. Another internal validity threat is mortality. Mortality could have been minimized by proper completion of the First Month Rental Assistance Letters. The limitation of the evaluation is the small sample (N=20) used; As a result this evaluation cannot be generalized to all rental assistance programs.

Procedures

The data collection occurred in the month of November 2000. The sampling frame used to collect the evaluation participants was from a list provided by agency, where every other name was selected. A Sample Assessment of Program Success/Program Outcome Data was used to gather basic information about the agency such as: original program goal, data availability, number of years operating (Appendix A). The participants “First Month Rent Letter” was selected and the apartment complex

was called to solicit their participation and consent over the telephone (Appendix B). Questionnaires were faxed to the apartment complex and management faxed back the completed questionnaires (Appendix C). TAMA's administrators also signed an evaluation consent form, (Appendix D), to ensure the completion of the evaluation. Additional information, such as, demographics, SES, and length of time within the Metro Atlanta area, was collected from the agency's intake forms.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed by using the SPSS program software. The descriptive analysis and frequencies are presented as percentages, for simple statical analysis, and graphs were used for a clearer interpretation of the results.

Summary

The methodology section presented a comprehensible way of how the information was gathered and how the evaluation was conducted. The setting, sample, procedure, measure, statistical analysis and summary were also discussed. The main purpose of descriptive statistical analysis is to reduce the data collection into simple and understandable terms, without losing much of the information collected. The following chapter presents the findings from the evaluation.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the results of this evaluation. It presents the demographics of the participants, provides the results for the evaluation question, and interprets the findings. The results from the evaluation showed TAMA stabilized homeless families for six months, but families were less likely to remain within the same housing for one year or more.

Demographics

The evaluation started with a sample of 25 participants, but only 20 questionnaires were completed. The remaining five questionnaires were omitted due to insufficient information, phone number changes, and refusal to participate in the evaluation. Lack of information on intake forms and on the “First Month Rent Letter” was just some of the other reasons for omission. There were 20 participants in this study, 90% (18) were females and 10% (2) were males. Within this population 50% (10) had one child, 15% (3) had two children, and 35% (7) had three children. When asked about their marital status 55% (11) were single, 20% (4) were married, 15% (3) were divorced, 10% (2) were separated. Upon intake 45% (9) remained within the metro Atlanta area for 1-2 weeks, 15% (3) were in the area for 2-3 weeks, 15% (3) were in the area for 3-4 weeks, and 25% (5) were in the area for 1-2 months. Ninety-Five percent (19) of the participants are African American and 5% (1) are Caucasian. When looking at the date of

the intake, 75% (15) of the participants entered the program in 1999 and 25% (5) entered the program in 2000 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics (N=20)

| Variable | N | Percentage % |
|----------------------------|----|--------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 2 | 10% |
| Female | 18 | 90% |
| Number of Children | | |
| 1 | 10 | 50% |
| 2 | 3 | 15% |
| 3 | 7 | 35% |
| Marital Status | | |
| Single | 11 | 55% |
| Married | 4 | 20% |
| Divorced | 3 | 15% |
| Separated | 2 | 10% |
| Time in Metro Atlanta area | | |
| 1-2 weeks | 9 | 45% |
| 2-3 weeks | 3 | 15% |
| 3-4 weeks | 3 | 15% |
| 1-2 months | 5 | 25% |
| Ethnicity | | |
| African American | 19 | 95% |
| Caucasian | 1 | 5% |
| Year service provided | | |
| 1999 | 15 | 75% |
| 2000 | 5 | 25% |

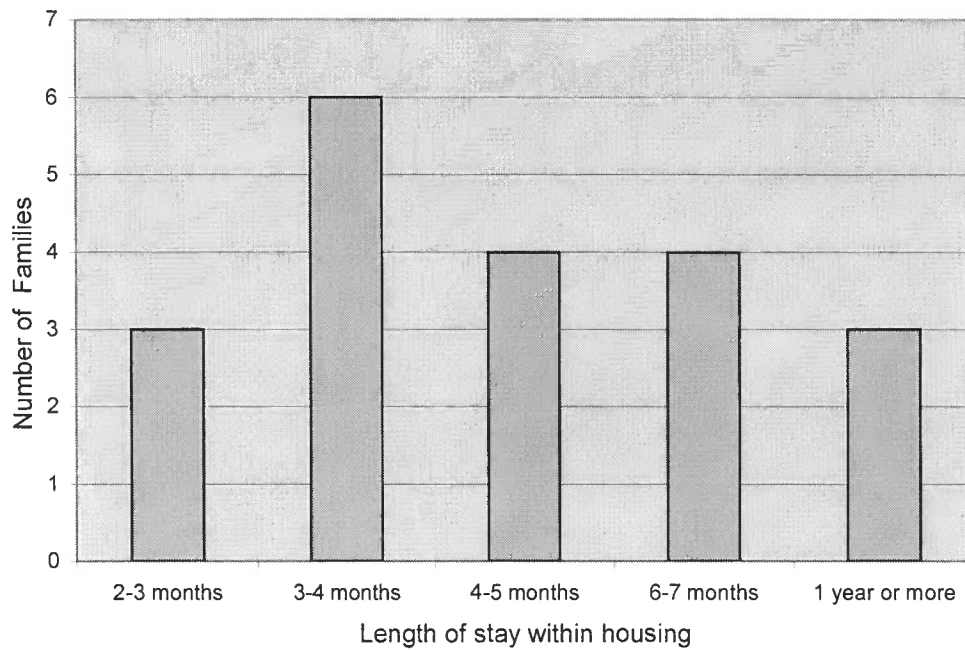


Figure 1. Length of time within housing complex

Figure 1 shows 15% (3) of the families remained within their locations for 2-3 months, 30% (6) remained for 3-4 months, 20% (4) remained for 4-5 months, 20% (4) remained for 6-7 months and 15% (3) remained in their locations for one year or more. Overall, the longest length of stay in housing was between 3-4 months.

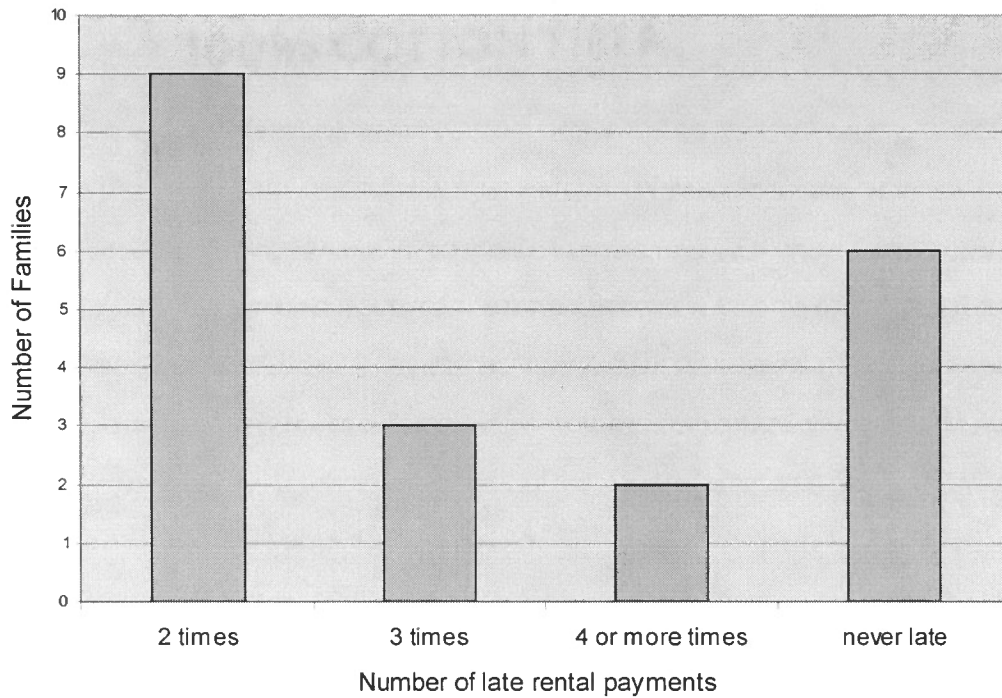


Figure 2. Number of times a family was late on rental payments

Figure 2 shows the number of times the families were late on their rental payments. The data shows that 45% (9) of the families were late two times, 15% (3) were late three times, 10% (2) were late four or more times, while 30% (6) of the participants were never late. The overall data shows that many families were late at least two times with their rental payments.

Table 2.

Community Integration

| Variable | N | Percentage % |
|-------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Community Support | | |
| Yes | 16 | 80% |
| No | 4 | 20% |
| Community-Based Organization | | |
| Yes | 13 | 65% |
| No | 7 | 35% |
| Participation in Activities | | |
| Yes | 8 | 40% |
| No | 6 | 30% |
| Not sure | 6 | 30% |

Table 2 shows the level of participation in community services from the participants within the study. When asked if their communities offered support services, 80% (16) responded yes and 20% (4) responded no. Along with the community support, when asked if these community-based organizations provided workshops, seminars, and holidays activities, 65% (13) stated yes and 35% (7) stated no. When asked about the level of participation from the residents with the activities, 40% (8) responded yes residents participated in community events, 30% (6) responded no, while 30% (6) were not sure if the tenants participated in community events.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings for the evaluation using descriptive analysis and frequencies for easier interpretation. According to the findings, although 30% (6) of the families remained within the same complex for three to four months, 70% (14) of families have been late on making their rental payments and 45% (9) have been late with their rental payments at least two times. The results from this evaluation show TAMA has stabilized homeless families, as stated in their objective for the program. The chapters that follow discuss the findings presented and wraps up the evaluation with implications to social work practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter examines the outcome of the evaluation, along with discussions relevant to the findings. The data suggests Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta was able to stabilize homeless families for at least 6 months, while fewer families remained within the same complex for a year. Other variables that may contribute to why families de-stabilize are discussed within the context of community support and/or resources.

Of the 20 participants selected for follow-up, 15% (3) remained within their locations for 2-3 months, 30% (6) remained for 3-4 months, 20% (4) remained for 4-5 months, 20% (4) remained for 6-7 months and 15% (3) remained within their locations for one year. Some of the variables that contributed to families not remaining within the same location include: family reunification, job loss, eviction, late rental payments, dysfunctional behavior, and relocation.

According to Fischer (2000), who conducted an evaluation of Family's First Transitional Housing Program, the average time within the same residence for many families was six to seven months. Fischer explains that more than half of the residents had difficulty meeting the requirements of the program (e.g. improper behavior, late payments of rent and fulfillment of employment preparation requirements).

Other variables, such as the number of times participants were late paying their rent, were examined to see if this factor reduced the length of stay. The results showed, 45% (9) were late two times, 15% (3) were late three times, while 30% (6) of the participants were never late. The findings further showed that although 20% (4) of these families have remained within the same complex for 6-7 months, 70% (14) of these families had been late with their rental payments, and 45% (9) had been late with rental payments at least two times. When looking at these families marital status, the results showed that, 55% (11) were single parents; 50% (10) had one child; and 45% (9) of these families had at least two late rental payments.

Lino (1994) conducted a study on income and spending patterns among single-mothers and found gross income varied widely among single-mother families depending on marital status, housing, food, and transportation accounted for the bulk of their total expenses. Lino further states, it is possible that single-mother families may underreport their income, and incur debt to cover expenses. Food, following the cost of housing, made up the second largest share of total expenses for single-mother families, accounting for a larger share of single-mother families expenses.

Some of the management team within the apartment complex stated, many of the families struggled with daycare, transportation and employment concerns. Lino's study (1994) supports what some of these families were going through and provides some insights as to why these families may have been late with their rental payments. There are some limitations to Lino's study: excluding of married families, single fathers, and additional resources used by single mothers. His findings suggest that families will need

more than one month of rental assistance in order to meet life's demands. With an extra month of support, families can save the earnings they would normally use for rent, to better assist them with their daily living and ultimately provide better stability.

When looking at questions that involved the level of community participation, it was interesting to see the types of activities offered by some of the community organizations and the percentage of participation from the sample population. Questions about the availability of community support for low-income families within the neighborhood showed 80% (16) responded that there were services, while 20% (4) responded no. It should be noted that many of the community-based organizations provided residents with workshops, seminars, and holiday activities. However, the level of participation was low with only 40% (8) participation, while 30% (6) did not participate in these activities, whereas another 30% (6) said they were not sure if the community support was offered. Some of the explanations given as to why 60% of the family's did not participate in community activities were; "services were not available", "no motivation to participate", "had some kind of problems with other tenants", "too tired to be active right after work", "the event was finished by the time the tenant reached home", and "not enough advertisement prior to the event."

Kingsley et al. (1998), emphasized resident participation to improve programs and their community. Kingsley contends that residents are more aware of the realities of their own environments than outside professionals. They have a better sense of what will work and what will not work in their environments. They will see practical opportunities for solving problems that outsiders have no basis for understanding. He further explains that

in order to achieve certain objectives, community associations often: (1) regularly distribute newsletters to all neighborhood residents on changing plans, progress, and upcoming events; (2) hold regular association meetings to which all residents are invited, with time on the agenda to allow their views to be heard, and other social gatherings to allow residents to get to know each other; (3) prepare an association statement of principles and strategy regarding involvement of residents in individual projects; (4) design improvement efforts so that a broad array of residents can participate and reach out to encourage their participation; and (4) provide some mechanism to allow all residents to have a voice in strategic plans and in selecting and validating association leadership.

Walsh (1997) stresses the importance of relationships in communities. He states, “the crucial insight of the community-building field is simple, and powerful: Persistent urban poverty is not just about money, but also about relationships. Community builders recognize that the chronically poor today lack not just jobs or income; but positive relationships with people and institutions that can help them improve their lives” (p. 292).

The findings from this evaluation support the systems theory, which is used for the conceptual framework. The theory states there should be a constant interaction between and among the individual, family, small groups, organizations, communities, societies and larger social structures. The interaction among Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta, the management team of the apartment complex, the participants, and the community did not work together to provide the interaction needed, which could explain why stability may have declined.

The theory is supported by the results of the evaluation, which showed there was a lack of motivation among residents within the complex, and the agency's inability to provide their clients with follow-ups and make necessary referrals to other agencies and or community resources gives strength to the decline of stability with these families. This explanation could clarify why 45% (9) of the participants were late at least two times with their rents. The 30% (6) of the responses stating the management team was not sure of participant involvement may have experienced a different outcome, which could have impacted the present findings.

Limitations of the Evaluation

There are several limitations to this evaluation that should be taken into consideration. The first limitation is the small sample population used. Although the evaluation provided useful information regarding rental assistance programs, the sample cannot be generalized to all homeless populations. The larger homeless population may be different due to substance abuse, and larger families.

The second limitation is the lack of literature on rental assistance programs. Since there is not enough information on non-profit rental assistance programs or agency rental assistance programs, the findings for the evaluation could not be compared with other rental assistance programs of equal caliber.

A third limitation is the data collection. Follow-up questions were directed to the management team within the apartment complex for information on past clients served by the agency. This approach only allowed the opportunity to measure the perceptions of the management team within the apartment complex, which is subjective. Personal

interviews, and follow-up with clients could have provided a better representation of what these families were going through on a daily basis. This would have also allowed further clarification and an expansion on any of the questions presented within the questionnaire.

Finally, losing five participants in the evaluation due to insufficient records, and other missing information was also problematic. The five that were dropped from the evaluation could have provided further insight to assist in the findings and provide some insight to the variables examined.

Suggested Research for Future Practices

More research is needed on rental assistance programs and their effectiveness. With continued research on these programs, there can be a substantial amount of information to assist other agencies with their rental programs. Another suggestion would be for those agencies with rental assistance programs to establish follow-up procedures with their clients from the beginning to the completion of the program. Finally, further research can be done investigating gender differences on the length of stay at a single location, and participant level of community involvement.

Summary

The findings revealed TAMA provided the stabilization to homeless families, but families were less likely to remain within the same complex for one year or more. Literature was presented to explain why many families could have been late with their rental payments, including additional expenditures such as transportation and food. The

following chapter will discuss the implication these findings have on the social work profession.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

This chapter provides a discussion on the overall evaluation and its contribution to the field of social work. Recommendations are provided for practitioners to assist families with community resources. Social workers are also encouraged to attempt to change guidelines, so that their programs are “prevention” focused. Additional attention is placed on the importance of social workers being able to evaluate their own programs.

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine if Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta stabilized homeless families, and the results showed they met their objective. Further research needs to be done to isolate why families do not use resources offered. The implications for practitioners are that there needs to be systematic follow-up with participants of programs to make sure they are meeting their program goals. Rental assistance programs are only as good as the agency’s efforts. As Manela and Moxley (1999) suggests, today the most effective form of agency-based evaluation enable an agency to engage in high-performance activities in human-service markets that are increasingly competitive. If social service programs are not evaluated then they stand a chance of short changing the clients they are supposed to serve. Social workers need to become familiar with evaluation methods, in order to make the necessary improvements to programs, so they can serve their clients effectively. A process evaluation can be used to provide systematic and continuous feedback on a program’s progress.

In terms of “preventive programming,” social workers can be very influential by writing grants, and establishing linkages with other available resources, so that clients can have access to services that could possibly lead to increased income for participants. Further evaluation needs to be conducted to control for other variables, such as, the workers’ motivation, as well as, the effects of extended rental assistance to see if families will become more stable after six months. To make evaluations of this contemporary human-service agencies must develop knowledge–building and utilization systems, of which evaluation is a key component, and make these systems an integral part of agency infrastructure and culture (Moxley & Manela, 2000).

Summary

This chapter summed up this evaluation by providing the expected results and the implications for social work. More evaluations needs to be done in this area, to establish grounded criteria of what defines a successful program and to make sure the clients’ needs are being met through programs. It is hoped this evaluation will be useful in providing new insight into rental assistance programs.

APPENDIX A:

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM PROCESS/PROGRAM OUTCOME DATA

Date:

Name of Agency:

Name of Project:

Project Location:

Number of Years Operating: _____

Evaluation Cycle: _____

Original Program Goal: Please state the program objective as stated in the original application. The following information is required to determine the extent of data available for the program in its entirety. Place a “Y” in the cell shaded if data are available and an “N” if data are not available. Please complete the entire table to ensure that each year has been reviewed.

| Data Required | Available | | Comments for all shaded Projects (check each evaluation cycle for which data are available) | |
|---------------|-----------|----|---|-------|
| | Yes | No | FY'98 | FY'99 |
| | | | | |

APPENDIX A: (CONTINUED)

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM PROCESS/PROGRAM OUTCOME DATA

Sample Program Summary Form

Date:

Name of Agency: _____

Name of Project: _____

Project Location: _____

Number of Years Operating: _____

Evaluation

Cycle: _____

Objective # _____

| Objective -id | Identified Data Gap | Data currently on file | Data ready by 11/15 | Data Permanently Unavailable |
|---------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Follow up

| Objective-id | Reason why data is permanently unavailable |
|--------------|--|
| | |
| | |
| | |

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM FOR EVALUATION

Informed Consent Form

This evaluation will examine Travelers Aid First Month Rental Assistance Program on the stabilization of homeless families. This evaluation is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of a Masters degree in the School of Social Work at Clark Atlanta University.

The names of the apartment complexes will be kept completely confidential. Participation in the research is totally voluntary; those who elect to take part may chose to discontinue at any time without prejudice. For further information please feel free to contact Ms. Kennedy at (xxx)xxx-xxxx. A verbal consent will be required to continue with this evaluation. Thank You.

APPENDIX C: KENNEDY STABILIZATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of apartment complex _____

Amount received for rent _____

Cost of monthly

rent _____

Fiscal Year _____

1) Does the client still reside within your complex? Yes _____ No _____

If not, please include balances left with the amount.

2) How long have the clients lived within the complex?

1) 2-3 months

2) 3-4 months

3) 4-5 months

4) 6-7 months

5) 1 year or more

3) Have they ever been late with the monthly rent?

1) Yes _____

2) No _____

if so, how many times?

1) 1

2) 2

3) 3

4) 4 or more times

4) Did you feel clients benefited from first month rental assistance programs?

1) Yes _____

2) No _____

if not, why

APPENDIX C: (CONTINUED)

KENNEDY STABILIZATION QUESTIONNAIRE

5) What do you think we could have done differently?

6) The average yearly salary of tenants residing within the apartment complex mainly consists of

- 1) \$25,000 and under 2) \$25-30,000 3) \$30,000 and up

Community Interaction

7) Is there any community support for low-income families within the neighborhood?

- 1) Yes _____ 2) No _____

8) Management communicates effectively with the tenants regarding apartment changes.

- 1) Yes _____ 2) No _____

if no, explain _____

9) Community organizations provide workshops, seminars, and holiday events for tenants.

- 1) Yes _____ 2) No _____

10) There is a strong sense of community among the residents within the building?

- 1) Yes _____ 2) No _____

11) To your knowledge, did the residents participate in any of the community services?

- 1) Yes _____ 2) No _____ 3) Not Sure _____

if no, explain:

APPENDIX D: SITE APPROVAL LETTER

We, _____, give Shakira Kennedy permission to conduct a program evaluation of our agency for the sole purpose of completing the degree requirements for the Master of Social Work at Clark Atlanta University. It is understood that Shakira Kennedy will receive the necessary documents to help her fulfill these requirements.

Researcher

Site Liaison

REFERENCES

- Ards, S. (1991). The role of housing vouchers in Baltimore City, Maryland. Review of Black Political Economy 19, 111.
- Barton, S. E. (1996). Social Housing versus Housing Allowances. Journal of the American Planning Association 62, 108.
- Brandell, J. (1997). Systems Theory. Theory and Practice in Clinical Social Work (pp. 3-18). The Free Press. New York, NY.
- Comprehensive Community Building and the new Challenges of devolution and welfare reform. (1999). (Panel discussion on the role of community organizations, foundations and social-service agencies in developing successful community-wide programs). National Civic Review 87, 137.
- Dolbeare, C. (1998, November). The low-income housing crisis and its impact on homelessness. Paper presented at the Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations. Policy Conference, "Assisting the Homeless in an Era of Retrenchment," Washington, DC.
- Fischer, R. L. (2000). Toward Self-sufficiency: Evaluating a Transitional Housing Program for homeless families. Policy Studies Journal. 28, 403.
- Fine, A. Thayer, C. & Coghlan, A. (2000). Program evaluation practice in the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 10, 331-339.

Friedlander, D. & Robins, P. (1995). Evaluating program evaluations: New evidence on commonly used nonexperimental methods. American Economic Review 85, 923.

Gardner, F. (2000). Design evaluation: Illuminating social work practice for better outcomes. Social Work 45, 176-182.

Hartung, J. M. & Henig, J. R. (1997). Housing vouchers and certificates as a vehicle for deconcentrating the poor: Evidence from the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan area. Urban Affairs Review 32, 403.

Kingsley, T, McNeely, J. & Gibson, J. (1998). Community Building Coming of Age. Paper presented to the Urban Institute. Development Training Institute, Inc.

Khadduri, J. & Struyk, R. (1981). Improving Section 8 Rental Assistance: Translating Evaluation into Policy. Evaluation Review 5, 193-201. Sage Publications, Inc.

Light, P.C. (1998). Sustaining innovation: Creating nonprofit and government organizations that innovate naturally. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lino, M. (1994). Income and spending patterns of single-mother families. Monthly Labor Review, 4, 29-36.

Manela, R., & Moxley, D. (1999). The new pillars of agency-based evaluation. Applied Behavioral Science Review, 7, 15.

Martin, L. L., & Kettner, P. M. (1997). Performance measurement: The new accountability. Administration in Social Work, 21, 17-30.

Moxley, D. & Manela, R. (2000). Agency-based evaluation and organizational change in the human services. Families in Society 81, 316-327.

Mulroy, E. (1990). Single-Parent Families and the housing crisis: Implications for Macropractice. Social Work Journal 35, 545.

National Coalition for the Homeless. (June, 1999). Who is Homeless?. Washington, DC: National Coalition Printing Office.

Patton, M. (1998). The challenges of diversity in evaluation: Narrow versus expansive perspectives. Science Communication 20, 148-164.

Percy, M.S. (1997). Not just a Shelter kid. How homeless children find Solace. (pp. 3) Garland Publishing Inc. New York NY.

Randall, E. (2000). Improving Section 8. Journal of Housing and Community Development. 57, 10.

Ravitch, R. (1997). The Unhoused. New Republic. 216, 10.

Research Atlanta, Inc. (1997). Homelessness in Metro Atlanta.

Secret, M., Jordan, A., & Ford, J. (1999). Empowerment evaluation as a social work strategy. Health and Social Work 24, 120-127.

Shinn, M. & Weitzman, B. (1996). "Homeless Families Are Different," Homeless in America. (pp. 24-33). In Baumohl J, ed. Phoenix, Ariz: Oryx Press.

Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta. (TAMA), Mission Statement, 1995.

Towns, H. (1998, Nov. 17). Homeless numbers vary, spur debates image vs. need: Estimates range from 11,000 to 47, 200, but services depend on an accurate count. Atlanta Journal-Constitution. C; 01.

U.S. Conference of Mayors, (1998). Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Vissing, Y. (1996). Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Homeless Children and Families in a Small Town America. Kentucky University. The University Press of Kentucky. (pp. 63).

Wagner, C. (1999). Social programs that work. The Futurist 33, 18-19.

Walsh, J. (1997). Community Building in theory and practice: Three case studies. National Civic Review 86, 293.

Welsh, M. (1996). Community Building: Building Community Practice. Social Work 41, 481.